**ISSN** 1816-6075 (Print), 1818-0523 (Online)
**Journal of System and Management Sciences**
Vol. 14 (2024) No. 12, pp. 157-179
DOI:10.33168/JSMS.2024.1210

# An Empirical Study on the Impact of Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing on Students' Purchase Decisions and Trust in Indonesian Higher Education

Ahmad Kamaludin [1], Yelsha Dwi Pasca [1], Ade Sobariah Hasanah [1], Munawaroh [2], Wildan Army Abdillah [3] and Muhammad Iqbal Nurfauzan[4]

[1]Institut Budi Utomo Nasional Indonesia
[2]Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia
[3]Finance and Banking Department, Politeknik Triguna Tasikmalaya Indonesia
[4]Management Department Binus Business School Doctor of Research in Management, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia

**Abstract.** This study, framed as an exploratory investigation, examines the influence of brand equity and relationship marketing on purchase decisions and institutional trust. The focal point is the 2013 Curriculum books for junior high school students at PT. Gramedia in the Ciayumajakuning region (Cirebon, Indramayu, Majalengka, Kuningan) in West Java. Utilizing descriptive and verification research methods, data were collected through questionnaires, observation techniques, and a comprehensive literature review using a saturated sampling technique. Descriptive analysis reveals moderate to good levels of brand equity, relationship marketing, purchase decisions, customer value, and customer trust. The verification results, analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), indicate significant positive effects. Specifically, brand equity significantly influences purchase decisions (t-value = 4.7548, $p < 0.05$), and relationship marketing has a substantial impact on purchase decisions (t-value = 4.8536, $p < 0.05$). Moreover, the study identifies that relationship marketing positively influences customer value (t-value = 5.0536, $p < 0.05$). The path coefficients demonstrate that customer trust is positively influenced by both purchase decisions (0.5138) and customer value (0.4973), with significant t-values ($p < 0.05$). In conclusion, this research offers valuable insights into the relationships between brand equity, relationship marketing, purchase decisions, customer value, and customer trust in the context of PT. Gramedia Junior High School's 2013 curriculum book customers in the Ciayumajakuning area. These findings underscore the significance of these factors in shaping the perceptions and decisions of the school institution, providing meaningful implications for educational product marketing strategies.

**Keywords:** Brand Equity, Customer Trust, Purchase Decisions Relationship Marketing.

# 1. Introduction

National development means building all Indonesians and the entire society. Right now, we're working harder to make development more even, especially in education, as required by our Constitution. Alongside basic human needs like education, the government, along with everyone in society, plays a big role in creating high-quality individuals. So, educational programs need to match people's basic needs, making sure they're ready for life in society. In recent times, Indonesia is improving its education system with Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. This law sees education as a planned effort to create a good learning environment so that students actively develop their skills and character. More details are explained in Government Regulation No. 13 of 2015, emphasizing the need for national standards that fit with society's changing needs. These standards are like the minimum criteria for education all over Indonesia, making sure students learn what society expects. To meet these standards, the government made Law No. 3 of 2017 about the Book System. This law aims to organize books well, making sure there are good quality textbooks for all learners. It covers getting manuscripts, publishing, printing, making electronic books, distributing, using, providing, and supervising books. The Book System is about managing books well, including getting, making, and using books. Law No. 3 of 2017 on the book system (SISBUK) wants better and more books that everyone can afford and access easily. That's why the government made Government Regulation No. 75 of 2019, hoping it will help the book world in Indonesia grow. This is important for developing a culture of reading, improving the nation's knowledge, and building our nation's civilization. We're doing this by building and supporting everyone involved in the book system.

Before Law No. 3 of 2017 was issued, the government released Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 34 of 2014 regarding the purchase of curriculum 2013 books by schools. The purpose was to support the implementation of the 2013 curriculum. The next step involved selecting ten book providers, most of which were major publishers in Indonesia, through a rigorous process. This selection was carried out by the Government Goods/Services Procurement Policy Agency (LKPP), which signed a blanket contract with the ten trusted providers. The ten appointed providers can be seen in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1: The list of names of providers for the 2013 curriculum books.

| The list of names of providers for the 2013 curriculum books. |
|---|
| PT. Pesona Edukasi |
| PT. Tiga Serangkai Pustaka Mandiri |
| PT. Mulia Kencana Semesta |
| PT. Intan Pariwara |
| PT. Sarana Panca Karya Nusa |
| PT. Temprina Media Grafika |
| PT. Gramedia |
| CV. Cakrawala Harapan Jaya |
| PT. Masmedia Buana Pustaka |

Source: Government Goods/Services Procurement Policy Agency2016

To meet the students' needs for textbooks in schools, the government has authorized these ten providers through the Government Goods/Services Procurement Policy Agency (LKPP) to serve the demand for Curriculum 2013 textbooks for elementary, junior high, and senior high/vocational school levels. The funding source comes from the School Operational Assistance (BOS) fund. Specifically, in the III Cirebon region, commonly known as CIAYUMAJAKUNING (Cirebon, Indramayu, Majalengka, Kuningan), all providers compete for the market of schools mandated to purchase Curriculum 2013 textbooks, and one of the providers is PT. Gramedia.

Based on the research conducted by PPM UNS in 2014 regarding the market research of Curriculum 2013 book publishers in three regions (Jakarta, Surabaya, and Semarang), it was found that PT. Erlangga was the most remembered publisher with a percentage of 53.68%. PT Gramedia fell into the "other" category with a percentage of consumer recall at 14.74%. Despite having the highest recall percentage, the consumer intention to purchase from PT. Erlangga was only 34.04%, followed by PT Yudhistira at 12.28%, PT Tiga Serangkai at 7.72%, BSE at 9.82%, Intan Pariwara at 3.16%, and the rest at 32.98%, distributed among 5 other publishers.

As one of the trusted providers by the government, PT. Gramedia is actually a company with a higher positioning compared to other providers. This is due to PT. Gramedia's experience as a publisher and printing company that has been in existence since 1970 and is well-known in Indonesia. However, the experience in the publishing and printing industry of PT. Gramedia has mainly relied on product marketing through a bookstore marketing network, which tends to be static and waits for consumers to come to offline stores. Door-to-door marketing or reaching out to consumers at schools has only been implemented since 2015 by deploying marketing teams specifically dedicated to promoting Curriculum 2013 government-published books. Despite deploying marketing teams to the field, there is still significant fluctuation in the sales of these books. This can be observed in the sales comparison of Curriculum 2013 books for junior high schools by PT. Gramedia Marketing Cirebon, Indramayu, Majalengka, Kuningan (CIAYUMAJAKUNING) for the years 2016-2020 in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2: Sales of K13 Middle School Level Books (In Million Rupiah)

| City/ Region | 2017 | | 2018 | | 2019 | | 2020 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Target | Realization | Target | Realization | Target | Realization | Target | Realization |
| **Cirebon City** | 359,13 | 264,53 | 345,66 | 727,85 | 342,34 | 68,62 | 339,48 | 50,86 |
| **Cirebon Reg** | 2.461,22 | 715,62 | 2.473,73 | 3.075,93 | 2.499,65 | 1,810,38 | 2.552,85 | 423.56 |
| **Indramayu Reg** | 1.955,02 | 1.034,44 | 1.903,37 | 3.736,78 | 1.889,40 | 2.225,79 | 1.903.73 | 1.126.87 |
| **Majalengka Reg** | 1.214,83 | 392,45 | 1.194,20 | 936,14 | 1.207,02 | 576,72 | 1.242,64 | 366,11 |
| **Kuningan Reg** | 1.292,54 | 550,19 | 1.262,77 | 1.716,98 | 1.258,55 | 1.088,50 | 1.262,52 | 258,25 |
| **Total** | **7.282,74** | **2.957,23** | **7.179,73** | **10.193,68** | **7.196,96** | **3.959,63** | **5.397,49** | **675,22** |

Source: Gramedia, 2021

Table 2 shows that over different periods, sales conducted by PT Gramedia in the Cirebon, Indramayu, Majalengka, and Kuningan marketing region (Ciayumajakuning) experienced fluctuating sales, with a decline in some market segments. Targets vary in each region depending on market share and the number of students in schools who are PT Gramedia's consumers. Overall, the sales target was only achieved in 2018. There was a significant difference between the realization and target in 2020, mainly due to the School Operational Assistance (BOS) fund allocation, which was previously used for book purchases, being on average used for other school needs. This happened because the Ministry of Education and Culture, which initially stipulated in the Technical Guidelines for BOS that 20% of the funds should be allocated for books, later removed this rule, and the book purchasing policy was handed over to each school. The drastic decrease in sales may be attributed to a decline in consumer trust, prompting the researcher to explore the factors contributing to the decline in sales of PT Gramedia's Curriculum 2013 books in the Ciayumajakuning region. As a government-appointed publisher and provider of Curriculum 2013 books, PT Gramedia has been a major publisher since 1970.

PT. Gramedia itself, in carrying out its marketing activities in the Ciayumajakuning region over a five-year period (2016 – 2020), reached 221 junior high schools out of a total of 1,141 junior high schools (as per data from Kemendikbud.go.id). The details are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Market Share of Curriculum 2013 Books for Junior High Schools by PT. Gramedia in the Ciayumajakuning Region

| No | Location | TOTAL JHS | PT.Gramedia Consumen | Persentase |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Cirebon City | 122 | 15 | 12,3% |
| **2** | Cirebon Region | 333 | 70 | 21% |
| **3** | Indramayu Reg | 309 | 75 | 24,3% |
| **4** | Majalengka Reg | 203 | 44 | 21,7 |
| **5** | Kuningan | 174 | 17 | 9,8% |
| | Total | **1.141** | **221** | **19,4%** |

From the data in Table 3, it is evident that the market share absorption of Curriculum 2013 books by PT. Gramedia in the Cirebon, Indramayu, Majalengka, and Kuningan region is relatively good, reaching 221 junior high schools or 19.4%. However, the number of schools purchasing Curriculum 2013 books from PT. Gramedia does not directly correlate with the value of purchases. The quantity of purchases is still relatively small and far from achieving the set targets. This has sparked the interest of researchers to conduct further research on the marketing activities of PT. Gramedia's Curriculum 2013 books in the Cirebon, Indramayu, Majalengka, and Kuningan regions.

Every company aims to achieve maximum profit, often anticipated through an increasing sales volume. However, in reality, companies find it challenging to reach their desired targets. Companies that were once dominant players in a specific product now have to share the market equally with their competitors. This can happen because companies are increasingly able to produce new products quickly, innovatively, and creatively. Companies compete for the same market, and another cause is the declining performance of the sales department. This is due to inadequate planning, slow changes in sales strategies, a decrease in the motivation of salespeople caused by high sales targets without proper compensation, lack of changes in unmanageable covered areas, and a decline in other supporting facilities such as administrative and delivery departments.

Based on the preliminary survey results regarding respondents' responses to customer trust perceived by PT Gramedia consumers it is found that overall, consumers have negative feelings about all statements regarding PT Gramedia's ability to produce needed products and satisfaction with the services provided (30% or 9 respondents), the attitude of PT Gramedia employees (46.7% or 14 respondents), the attitude of employees toward handling complaints (24% or 8 respondents), the alignment of services provided with the offered promotions (36.7% or 11 respondents), and the provision of information when there is a shortage in product delivery (33.3% or 10 respondents). Empirical evidence shows that consumers in Indonesia trust Japanese brands more and decide to make purchases solely based on the brand (Suhaily & Darmoyo, 2017). A similar situation occurs in Hong Kong, where consumer trust in currency in online sales is crucial, as it can encourage consumers to make purchases (Che et al., 2017). Based on this, PT Gramedia management should make efforts to improve customer trust so that consumers' decisions to purchase books from PT Gramedia can increase.

Based on the preliminary survey results regarding respondents' responses to the perceived purchase decisions by PT Gramedia consumers it is found that respondents have a negative attitude towards all statements ranging from 20% to 50% of the total respondents. 20% of respondents, or 6 individuals, express their disagreement with the statement about PT Gramedia's ability to provide Curriculum 2013 book needs. The highest negative attitude is perceived towards the statement about the flexibility of book purchasing time, with 50% or 15 respondents having a negative attitude. The negative responses that occurred may be related to the low trust of PT Gramedia consumers in the Ciayumajakuning marketing region. To address the low purchase decisions, based on previous research conducted in Korea, it was identified that marketers should focus on communicating the value of their products or perceived value to customers, compare their prices with competitors, and observe how they influence consumer purchase decisions (Hanaysha, 2018). Perceived value has been used to examine variables influencing the future use of services and products as well as purchase decisions (Jamal & Sharifuddin, 2015). In Indonesia, when customer value is well-maintained, companies will benefit as their main goal in business. Therefore, it is essential to understand the factors that underlie consumers' decisions to buy goods or services (Simbolon, 2016). Other research results state that if the main factor in improving the purchase decision of a product or service is customer value, managers must pay attention to the perceived value of their customers (Yee & San, 2011). Customer value becomes a factor that leads to declining sales because the benefits obtained do not match the costs incurred (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Based on the preliminary survey results regarding respondents' responses to the perceived customer value by PT Gramedia consumers it is found that consumers have negative feelings about the statement regarding their choice of using Curriculum 2013 books from Gramedia being the right thing to do, with a percentage of 36.7% (total of 11 respondents). On average, respondents (around 30% or 9 respondents) disagree with statements regarding quality and service, ease of obtaining products, comfort with services, and pride when using products from PT Gramedia. However, the majority of respondents agree that PT Gramedia is a publisher that already has popularity compared to other publishers (19 respondents). Customer value is a set of economic, technical, service, and social benefits exchanged for the price paid for a product, considering the offers and prices from available suppliers (Tjiptono, 2006). Some studies show empirical evidence that customer value has an impact on purchase decisions (Fachmi & Rahayu Tri Astuti, 2016; Priansa, 2016; Siswanto et al., 2018; Yuliana & Putra, 2018).

Customer value not only can improve purchase decisions but is also related to customer trust. Social and electronic media are involved in the process of making purchase decisions for a product in India because consumer trust has been built between them (Prasad et al., 2017). Empirical study In the UK, tourists prefer to buy plane tickets online because of their trust in the provider. Evidence also shows that consumer trust is a fundamental factor in purchase decisions made by consumers (Pappas, 2017). Therefore, there is a possibility of a relationship between purchase decisions and customer trust to explain the factors influencing the decline in revenue for PT Gramedia in the Ciayumajakuning marketing region. Customer value not only can enhance customer trust but also the extent to which customers perceive benefits in making choices, making them ready to make a purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Based on the initial survey results customer integrity, which can indicate customer trust, is still in the low category compared to ability and kindness.

Based on the preliminary survey results regarding respondents' responses to Brand Equity or the perceived Brand Equity by PT Gramedia consumers it is found that the majority of respondents have negative feelings about some statements, such as: the quality of PT. Gramedia products is better than other publishers and their willingness to recommend PT. Gramedia to their community (33.3% or 10 respondents), Curriculum 2013 book products exceed government-set standards, and respondents recognize the excellence of PT. Gramedia compared to other publishers (30% or 9 respondents). To address how Brand Equity can be improved, thereby influencing the increase in consumer purchasing decisions and its implications on customer trust, marketers can enhance customer awareness of brand equity. Research in Germany found empirical evidence that higher brand equity leads to an increase in customer value (Staudt et al., 2014). Meanwhile, a study in Ghana confirmed that Brand Equity has a positive relationship with customer value, where Brand Equity can be used to enhance customer value (Amoako, 2019). In the food industry, Brand Equity has a positive influence on customer value (Wang et al., 2015). Furthermore, Brand Equity can also influence customer trust. Customer trust is greatly influenced by Brand Equity because a strong brand can enhance customer trust (Afzal et al., 2010). This aligns with empirical evidence stating that brand awareness is crucial in addressing customer trust issues (Thaichon & Quach, 2015). However, in a study by Vincent Sjaklif and Hendra (2020), partial variables such as brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality do not affect purchasing decisions on the Tokopedia online shopping platform. This finding is consistent with research by Van Thuy et al. (2022), stating that brand awareness and perceived quality do not impact consumer purchasing decisions for 261 consumers buying mobile retailer (MR) products in Ho Chi Minh City.

Relationship Marketing, fundamentally, is an alternative strategy to the traditional transactional approach of the marketing mix. It serves as a way to gain sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) and is considered the best approach to retain customers (Lupiyoadi, 2013). Relationship Marketing centers around customer value to meet their expectations and quality concerns. Based on the preliminary survey results regarding respondents' responses to the perceived relationship marketing by PT Gramedia consumers it is found that at least 20% or 6 respondents express negative feelings towards the perceived relationship. On average, respondents express their disagreement with statements about their trust in PT Gramedia's services (30% or 9 respondents) and the alignment of services with consumer expectations (26.7% or 8 respondents). Respondents also disagree with statements about PT Gramedia's speed in providing solutions to problems, the availability of needed information services (33.3% or 10 respondents), and the high honesty and integrity of employees (36.7% or 11 respondents).

In the telecommunications industry in Ghana, empirical evidence suggests that when companies enhance their relationship marketing practices, customer value tends to increase (Amoako, 2019).Consistent with this finding, (Alrubaiee & Al-Nazer, 2010) state that relationship marketing has been proven to contribute to improving customer value. Research findings by (Lin & Ching Yuh, 2010) show that relationship marketing has a positive and significant influence on customer trust. In line with that, (Kaur et al., 2012) argue that relationship marketing has a greater impact on customer trust compared to perceived service quality and satisfaction. Furthermore, company objectives can be achieved through the quality of service and customer complaint handling, which are also dimensions of relationship marketing (Álvarez et al., 2011). However, a study by (Anastasia et al., 2023) found that Relationship marketing does not influence consumer purchasing decisions for Mixue products in the city of Makassar.

Previous research in India indicates that to enhance purchasing decisions, companies should focus on improving their brand equity. This is crucial because when a company emphasizes its brand equity, consumers are more interested in buying goods or services from that company (Nigam & Kaushik, 2011). Another study in Sri Lanka states that when a product has high brand equity, it will increase consumer purchases (Gunawardane, 2015). In America, brand equity leads to perceived effectiveness and significantly influences the functional components of perceived performance, playing a key role in creating positive consequences in the purchasing decision-making process (Broyles et al, 2015). Besides brand equity, to improve purchasing decisions, marketers must also enhance relationship marketing. This is important because consumer purchases are at the core of the relationship marketing process (Buttle, 2004).

Research in Indonesia itself found evidence that relationship marketing helps consumers when making purchasing decisions (Simbolon, 2016). The lack of previous experience with external brands causes consumers in developing countries to base their purchasing decisions on previous brands (Nigam & Kaushik, 2011). Purchasing decisions are shaped by interactive dialogue in marketing a product (Köhler et al., 2011). Customer value can be increased and will foster customer trust, where customer value can provide a sense of security and confidence to customers (Barnes, 2003). Increasing customer trust comes from the benefits received by consumers (Mowen & Minor, 2012).

Various studies show that there is a correlation or influence of customer value on customer trust. Research in Malaysia shows that customer value helps improve customer trust. Marketers must understand which values are crucial to assist the company in creating sustainable competitive advantages and achieving higher levels of customer trust (Chuah et al., 2013). Similarly, in Indonesia, research on domestic tourists shows that trust arises naturally from satisfaction with tourism services offered (Koesworodjati, 2017). Customer value becomes a way to increase customer trust in South Africa in marketing its products (Chinomona et al., 2013). From the previous discussions, there is an interconnection between factors that can be problems or solutions. Therefore, this topic is interesting to further investigate the relationships among these factors. In Indonesia, there has been no research examining all these factors simultaneously. With this research, it is expected to develop a new model on how brand equity and relationship marketing can impact customer decisions and trust, and subsequently influence customer value. In Indonesia, there is currently no similar model focusing on the sale of curriculum books as learning materials specifically targeted at junior high school students. This paper contributes a new perspective, especially in the context of research in Indonesia that encompasses the influence of brand equity and relationship marketing on customer decisions and trust, focusing on the sale of curriculum books for middle school students. In a theoretical framework, this paper integrates the concepts of brand equity and relationship marketing, providing in-depth insights into the factors influencing consumer behavior in the education market. Contextually, this paper provides a more specific understanding of the dynamics of the curriculum book market in Indonesia, particularly at the middle school level. By focusing on curriculum books, the research highlights the importance of marketing factors, such as brand equity and relationship marketing, in shaping purchasing decisions and customer trust in the education sector. The uniqueness of this paper lies in the application of marketing concepts in the educational context, which often does not receive enough attention. By emphasizing curriculum books as educational products, this paper makes a significant contribution to understanding how book publishing companies can enhance relationships with customers and build brand equity in the education market. Overall, this paper offers a new perspective by combining marketing theory with the reality of the education market in Indonesia, explaining how certain factors can influence customer decisions and trust in the context of selling curriculum books for middle school students.

## 2. Literature Review

### Brand Equity, Relationship Marketing, and Purchase Decisions

Brand is one of the crucial factors in marketing activities to introduce and offer products (Surachman in Prasetya, 2014). A brand provides many benefits to consumers, including helping them identify the offered benefits and product quality (Lamanuk & Ferrinadewi, 2020). Ultimately, the true value and future prospects of a brand rely on consumers, their knowledge of the brand, and their potential responses to marketing efforts resulting from brand awareness (Pradana & Reventiary, 2016). Brand equity can be categorized into 5 categories: brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other proprietary brand assets (Aaker, 2018). The findings of study (D et al., 2021; Satvati et al., 2016) indicate that brand equity influences purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, a study from (Van Thuy et al., 2022; Vincent Sjaklif, Hendra, 2020) proves contrasting results compared to the previous research, stating that brand equity does not influence purchasing decisions. Relationship Marketing is a process to create, maintain, and enhance strong relationships with customers and other stakeholders (Kotler dan Amstrong, 2012).

Relationship marketing is a concept essential for attracting and retaining customers in an organization (Sivesan & Achchuthan, 2013). In the modern business world, marketing focus reflects a shift from transactional marketing to relationship marketing. Building, maintaining, and continually improving customer relationships are crucial aspects of business. The concept of relationship marketing is widely understood, both academically and professionally, with the goal of enhancing strong relationships and turning indifferent customers into loyal ones. Purchase decisions involve individual activities directly engaged in deciding to purchase a product offered by a seller. Purchase decisions are the stage in the buyer decision-making process where consumers actually make a purchase (Kotler, P., & Amstrong, 2014). Purchase decisions arise from evaluating alternatives because consumers may decide not to buy and save their money, or spend it on entirely different goods. Or, they might want to play it safe by deciding to buy a small amount for experimentation purposes (Hollensen, 2015). In the decision-making process, consumers have goals or behaviors they want to achieve, helping to solve their problems.

Although the Aaker and Keller models have different perspectives, both agree that brand equity reflects the added value resulting from marketing investment in the brand. Consumers loyal to a brand tend to make repeat purchases, especially if there is a deep emotional connection between the brand and the consumer. Strong brand equity helps attract potential consumers, dispel doubts about the brand's quality, and enhance purchase decisions. Good marketing management should be able to understand consumer needs and build close relationships through relationship marketing. Purchase decisions are influenced by various factors, including brand equity and relationship marketing (Mitang et al., 2020), as well as customer value (Ali, 2021; Chinomona et al., 2013; Hanaysha, 2018; Köhler et al., 2011; Simbolon, 2016; Yee & San, 2011). Empirical evidence shows that relationship marketing has a positive impact on purchase decisions, and together with brand equity, both positively influence customer value (Simamora et al., 2019). While existing research has contributed to understanding the interplay between brand equity, relationship marketing, and purchase decisions, there remain unresolved aspects that the current study seeks to investigate. One unresolved aspect is the specific mechanisms through which relationship marketing influences brand equity and, in turn, affects purchase decisions. Especially in the focus of marketing curriculum books in Indonesia, similar research is still limited

H1a: Brand equity has a positive impact on purchase decision.

H1b: Relationship marketing has a positive impact on purchase decisions.

## Brand Equity, Relationship Marketing, and Customer Value

Efforts to enhance relationship marketing are a strategy to attract customers and strengthen relationships with them. This helps companies better understand consumers, meet their needs, and create mutually beneficial relationships. Relationship marketing, involving two-way communication, is interpreted as a way to approach customers personally (Zulkifli, 2012). Improving customer value can also be achieved through increasing brand equity. The higher the brand equity, the more customer value increases (Chinomona et al., 2013; Staudt et al., 2014). Studies in Ghana affirm a positive relationship between brand equity and customer value (Amoako et al., 2019). Enhanced relationship marketing practices can lead to an increase in customer value. This includes improving customer trust and effectively managing complaints (Amoako et al., 2019; Kaur et al., 2012; Lin & Ching Yuh, 2010). Effective complaint handling, with well-trained and highly motivated employees, can contribute to achieving organizational goals (Álvarez et al., 2011). Thus, the development of relationship marketing and brand equity becomes a crucial factor in building customer value and enhancing company performance. Although existing research has contributed to understanding the interrelationships between brand equity, relationship marketing, and customer value, there are still unresolved aspects that this research seeks to investigate. One unresolved aspect is the specific mechanisms through which relationship marketing influences brand equity and, in turn, influences customer value. especially in the focus of marketing curriculum books in Indonesia, similar research is still limited

H2a: Brand equity has a positive impact on customer value.

H2b: Relationship marketing has a positive impact on customer value.

## Purchase Decisions and Customer Trust

Trust means that an individual considers their transactional partner to be reliable and honest, with a belief in them (Brodie et al., 2013). Furthermore (McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011) states that trust is a cognitive expectation or an emotional perspective. If the trusted object is an organization, trust is defined as the customer's reliance on the quality of service and reliability offered by the organization (Sashi, 2012). Trust is a crucial factor in today's competitive business environment. Trust in business relationships helps reduce business risks (Anderson and Narus in Saberi et al., 2018). Swan et al. in Awa et al., (2015) concluded that customer trust leads to four outcomes: (1) customers are satisfied with the salesforce, the company, and the transaction; (2) customers have a positive attitude towards the purchased commodities and exhibit loyalty and support for the company; (3) customer trust further enhances purchasing interest; and (4) customers choose to buy commodities offered by a company they trust. Based on the theoretical and empirical connections established between Purchase Decisions and Customer Trust, the research question for this study is formulated as follows: To what extent and through what mechanisms do Purchase Decisions partially influence the Customer Trust of consumers in PT. Gramedia Ciayumajakuning's marketing region?

H3: Purchase decisions has a positive impact on customer trust

### Customer Value and Customer Trust

Customer trust in the attributes and benefits of a product reflects individual perceptions, indicating that each customer has different beliefs (Heru et al., 2015). Trust in service marketing emphasizes individual attitudes regarding consumer beliefs in the quality and reliability of the services they receive (Barnes et al. in Alfonso et al., 2012). This trust is closely related to customer satisfaction, where the perceived increase in value by customers can meet or even exceed their expectations. Trust itself includes a set of specific beliefs in integrity, benevolence, competence, and predictability (Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015).. Several empirical pieces of evidence indicate a positive influence between customer value and customer trust (Hermuningsih et al., 2018; Maesarah & Madiawati, 2015; P. S. P. Ratnasari & Purnawati, 2019). Based on the theoretical and empirical connections established between Customer Value and Customer Trust, the research question for this study is formulated as follows: To what extent and through what mechanisms do Customer Value partially influence the Customer Trust of consumers in PT. Gramedia Ciayumajakuning's marketing region?

H4: Customer value has a positive impact on customer trust.

## 3. Research Methods

This research uses a descriptive and verification approach. A descriptive approach is used to describe and analyze research findings without drawing broader conclusions (Narimawati, 2010). The goal is to create a typology or pattern of the phenomena under investigation, describe process mechanisms, and establish categories or patterns. This research provides an overview of respondents' perspectives regarding brand equity, relationship marketing, purchasing decisions, customer value, and customer trust in PT. Scholastic. With descriptive and verification characteristics, the research method used is the explanatory survey method. This method involves collecting information from a portion of the population with the aim of understanding opinions regarding the research object. The population needs to be identified accurately and precisely from the beginning of the research. Poor identification of the population may lead to inaccurate research conclusions. The research results are likely to be irrelevant due to the incorrect determination of the population (Hermawan, 2017). Based on the understanding of the population in this research, the population is the customers of PT. Gramedia in the CIAYUMAJAKUNING area.

Table 4: Research Area Population

| Area/Location | Customer |
|---|---|
| Majalengka | 44 |
| Kota Cirebon | 15 |
| Kab. Cirebon | 70 |
| Indramayu | 75 |
| Kuningan | 17 |
| Total Population | 221JHS |

Source: PT. Gramedia data, Diolah (2020)

Hair et al., as cited in Cascio (2011), recommends that the sample size for research using Structural

Equation Modeling should range from 200 to 400 respondents. Since the research population is only 221, with a minimum theoretical requirement of 200 respondents, the sampling technique used in this study is a census, where the entire population is used as the sample for analysis.

Thus, this research will offer a comprehensive overview and test hypotheses regarding the factors that influence customer trust in the context of brand equity, relationship marketing, purchasing decisions, and customer value. This research uses various data collection techniques, including: Questionnaire: This primary data collection technique is carried out by distributing a series of written questions online to Gramedia Customers (the responsible for junior high school students) in the CIAYUMAJAKUNING area. The questionnaire presents statements that reflect indicators on the variables of brand equity, relationship marketing, purchasing decisions, customer value and customer trust. Respondents choose alternative answers according to those provided for each statement. Literature Review: Information related to existing theories regarding the problems and variables studied is collected through a literature review. Including studying literature regarding the variables studied from various sources. In this research, an analytical design was carried out with several instrument tests such as validity tests, reliability tests and normality tests. Next, hypothesis testing was carried out to answer research questions related to brand equity research models, relationship marketing, purchasing decisions, customer trust, and customer value.

Table 5: Operationalization of Construct

| VARIABEL | DIMENSIONS | INDICATORS |
|---|---|---|
| **BRAND EQUITY** (Aaker, 2018; Durianto dalam Sari, 2013; Rangkuti dalam Bastian, 2014; Sharokk et al, 2012; Kotler dan Keller, 2016) | Brand Awareness | Familiar brands |
| | | Well-known brands |
| | | Recognized brands among competitors |
| | Perceived Quality | Performance |
| | | Features |
| | | Reliability |
| | | Conformance with Specifications |
| | | Durability |
| | | Serviceability |
| | | Fit and finish |
| | Brand Association | Attributes |
| | | Benefits |
| | | Behavior |
| | Brand Loyalty | Repurchase |
| | | Purchase across product and service lines |
| | | Retention |
| | | Referral |
| **RELATIONSHIP MARKETING** (Ndubisi dalam Ganguli dan Roy, 2011; Lages dalam Akbar, 2018; Fulletton, 2014; Ebert, 2015) | Trust | Kejujuran |
| | | Kebajikan |
| | | Kompetensi |
| | Commitment | Continuance Commitment |
| | | Normative Commitment |
| | | Affective Commitment |
| | Communication | Advertisement |
| | | personal selling |
| | | sales promotion |
| | | direct or interactive marketing |
| | | publicity |
| | Complaint handling | Distributive justice |
| | | Procedural justice |
| | | Interactional Justice |
| **PURCHASING DECISION** | Product choices, | Level of product choices |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (Kotler &Keller, 2016; Kotler & Armstrong, 2012; Hollensen, 2015; Amron, 2018) | Brand choices, | Level of brand choices and presentation techniques |
| | Retailer choices, | Level of retailer choices |
| | Purchase quantity, | Level of purchase quantity |
| | Purchase timing, | Level of purchase timing |
| | Payment method | Level of payment method |
| **CUSTOMER VALUE** (Tjiptono, 2010; Sanchez et al., 2012; Sweeney and dalam Ryu et al., 2012) | Emotional value | Emotional feelings perceived for a product |
| | | Positive feelings while using the product |
| | | Product's ability to evoke emotions |
| | Functional value | Product performance |
| | | Ease of use of the product |
| | | Service meeting expectations |
| | Social value | Enhancement of social concept |
| | | Assessment of social environment |
| | | Improvement of self-image in the eyes of others |
| **CUSTOMER TRUST** (McKnight dkk dalam Smith et al., 2011; Vuuren et al., 2013; Mayer, 2012) | Ability | Competence |
| | | Experience |
| | | Broad knowledge |
| | | Institutional endorsement |
| | Benevolence | Attention |
| | | Willingness to share |
| | | Reliability |
| | Integrity | Fulfillment |
| | | Transparency |
| | | Dependability |

Validity, a cornerstone of measurement accuracy, assesses the extent to which a tool measures the intended construct (Singarimbun & Effendi, 1995). Rigorous validity testing instills confidence in the reliability of collected data by ensuring minimal error variance. In this study, a structural approach employing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized to examine the validity of individual indicator variables within the employed questionnaire. The following section presents the validity results for each indicator variable.

Table 6: Validity Test

| Variable | Dimension | R-Count | R-Critical | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Equity | Brand Awareness | 0,307 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Perceived Quality | 0,601 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Brand Association | 0,633 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Brand Loyalty | 0,583 | 0,300 | Valid |
| Relationship Marketing | Trust | 0,464 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Commitment | 0,653 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Complaint handling | 0,641 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Communication | 0,591 | 0,300 | Valid |
| Purchasing Decision | Product choices | 0,449 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Brand choices | 0,590 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Retailer choices | 0,624 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Purchase quantity | 0,717 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Purchase timing | 0,553 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Payment method | 0,665 | 0,300 | Valid |
| Customer Value | Emotional value | 0,673 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Functional value | 0,622 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Social value | 0,692 | 0,300 | Valid |
| Customer Trust | Ability | 0,462 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Benevolence | 0,579 | 0,300 | Valid |
| | Integrity | 0,629 | 0,300 | Valid |

After testing the validity of the questions in the questionnaire used in this research, a reliability test was then carried out. Reliability is an index that shows the extent to which a measuring instrument can be trusted or reliable (Singarimbun & Effendi, 1995). Reliability shows the consistency of the measuring instrument in measuring the same symptoms.

Table 7: Reliable Test

| Variable | r-count | r-table | Result |
|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Equity | 0,867 | 0,700 | **Reliable** |
| Relationship Marketing | 0,868 | 0,700 | **Reliable** |
| Purchasing Decision | 0,905 | 0,700 | **Reliable** |
| Customer Value | 0,894 | 0,700 | **Reliable** |
| Customer Trust | 0,873 | 0,700 | **Reliable** |

Based on the reliability test results above, the reliability value for the research instrument reliability coefficient value is greater than 0.700, which means that all research variables are declared reliable or meet the requirements. Because the validity test and reliability test state that all variables are valid and reliable, this means that the instrument (questionnaire) used is valid and reliable.

## 4. Results and Discussion

In this research, primary data was collected through the distribution of questionnaires to understand the characteristics of respondents and customer responses at area CIAYUMAJAKUNING. Based on the questionnaire distributed to 221 customers, here is the composition of respondents according to gender, age, and highest education:

Table 8: Socio Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 124 | 56,11% |
| Female | 97 | 43,89% |
| Age | | |
| < 30 | 29 | 13,12% |
| 31 – 35 | 39 | 17,65% |
| 36 – 40 | 43 | 19,46% |
| 41 – 45 | 52 | 23,53% |
| 46 – 50 | 30 | 13,57% |
| > 51 | 28 | 12,67% |
| Education | | |
| Diploma | 96 | 43,44% |
| Bachelor | 123 | 55,66% |
| Postgraduate | 2 | 0,90% |

It can be observed that the composition of respondents based on gender in this study is predominantly male customers. However, the difference in numbers is not significantly substantial. Additionally, the composition of respondents based on age is dominated by customers in the 41 – 45 age range. This is because the majority of customers in the Gramedia CIAYUMAJAKUNING Marketing Area are decision-makers in their workplaces. Furthermore, the composition of respondents based on education level is mainly customers with a postgraduate degree. This is due to the fact that most customers in the Gramedia CIAYUMAJAKUNING Marketing Area hold a postgraduate degree.

The results of the LISREL estimation need further clarification for each dimension of the research. This explanation is necessary because each variable is measured indirectly but is formed by several indicators that need to be examined for their roles in shaping these variables. For a clearer understanding, each hypothesis will be discussed individually.

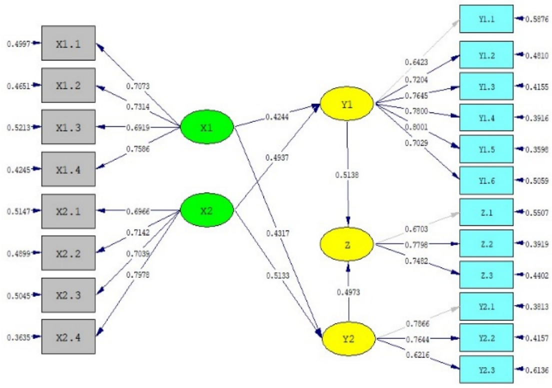


Fig 2: The Structure of the Relationship Among All Research Variables The Influence of Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing on Purchase Decisions

Structural Model 1 illustrates the relationship between Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing on Purchase Decisions, as stated in the hypotheses as follows: That Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing influence Purchase Decisions both partially and simultaneously. Based on the data processing results using the Lisrel program for Structural Model 1, in accordance with the proposed hypotheses, the obtained results are as follows:

$$Y1 = 0.4244*X1 + 0.4937*X2, \text{Errorvar} = 0.2743, R2 = 0.7257$$

Based on the above equations, it can be explained that the Purchase Decision variable is positively influenced by Brand Equity with a path coefficient of 0.4244 and positively influenced by Relationship Marketing with a path coefficient of 0.4937. Thus, the proposed conceptual hypotheses have been tested and accepted. The complete structural model for substructure 1 can be described as follows:

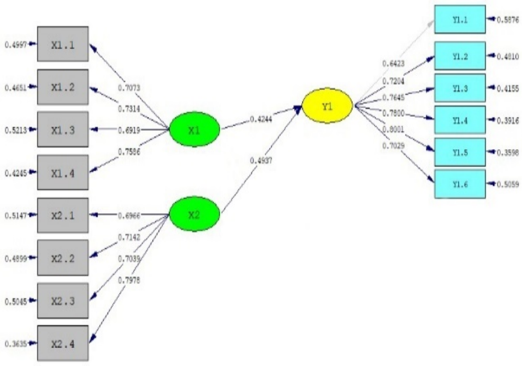


Fig 3: Path Coefficient of Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing on Purchasing Decisions

Based on the correlation values and path coefficients obtained from the Lisrel 8.80 calculation results, the magnitude of the direct and indirect effects of Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing on Purchase Decisions can be determined as follows:

Table 9: Direct and Indirect Influence of Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing Variables on Purchasing Decisions

| | Path Coeff | Direct Effect | Influence Through | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Brand Equity* | *Relationship Marketing* | Total indirect | |
| ***Brand Equity*** | 0,4244 | 18,01% | | 15,09% | 15,09% | **33,11%** |
| ***Relationship Marketing*** | 0,4937 | 24,37% | 15,09% | | 15,09% | **39,47%** |
| **Total** | | **42,39%** | **15,09%** | **15,09%** | **30,19%** | **72,57%** |

Based on the table above, the Purchase Decision is influenced by both direct and indirect effects. The direct effect of the Brand Equity variable is 18.01%, while its indirect effect through Relationship Marketing is 15.09%. The direct effect of the Relationship Marketing variable on Purchase Decision is 24.37%, while its indirect effect through Brand Equity is 15.09%. Based on the calculation results, the total partial influence is highest for the Relationship Marketing variable, with a total influence on Purchase Decision of 39.47%. Therefore, it can be concluded that to improve Purchase Decision, it must be supported by effective Relationship Marketing. However, the influence of other variables studied in this research is also significant, with Brand Equity having a total partial influence of 33.11%.

Table 10: Partial Test Results of Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing on Purchase

| structural | Path Coefficients | t-count | t-table | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $\gamma_1$ | 0,4244 | 4,7548 | 1,9709 | Accepted |
| $\gamma 2$ | 0,4937 | 4,8536 | 1,9709 | Accepted |

For the path coefficient X1 to Y1 with a value of 0.4244, the obtained t-value is 4.7548, considering a significance level ($\alpha$) of 5%. The critical t-value (t-table) at a 5% significance level with degrees of freedom 221 (t0.05.221) is 1.9709. Since the calculated t-value (4.7548) is greater than the critical t-value (1.9709), we reject the null hypothesis (H0). In other words, Brand Equity has a significant effect on Purchase Decision. Similarly, for the path coefficient X2 to Y1 with a value of 0.4937, the obtained t-value is 4.8536, considering a significance level ($\alpha$) of 5%. The critical t-value (t-table) at a 5% significance level with degrees of freedom 221 (t0.05.221) is 1.9709. Since the calculated t-value (4.8536) is greater than the critical t-value (1.9709), we reject the null hypothesis (H0). In other words, Relationship Marketing has a significant effect on Purchase Decision. Based on the calculation, the obtained F-value is 288.4338, where the criteria for rejecting H0 are if the F-value is greater than the F-table or F0 > F-table, with degrees of freedom v1=2 and v2=221–2–1 and a confidence level of 95%. From the F-distribution table, the F-table value for F0.05,2,221 = 3.0372. Since 288.4338 is greater than 3.0372, H0 is rejected, meaning that it can be concluded that there is a linear relationship between Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing towards Purchase Decision, or it can be interpreted that there is a joint influence between Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing towards Purchase Decision.

Structural Model 2 depicts the relationship between Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing on Customer Value, as stated in the hypotheses as follows: That Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing influence Customer Value both partially and simultaneously. Based on the data processing results using the Lisrel program for Structural Model 2, in accordance with the proposed hypotheses, the obtained results are as follows:

$$Y2 = 0.4317*X1 + 0.5133*X2, \text{Errorvar} = 0.2309, R2 = 0.7691$$

Based on the above equations, it can be explained that the Customer Value variable is positively influenced by Brand Equity with a path coefficient of 0.4317 and positively influenced by Relationship Marketing with a path coefficient of 0.5133. Thus, the proposed conceptual hypotheses have been tested and accepted. The complete structural model for substructure 2 can be described as follows:

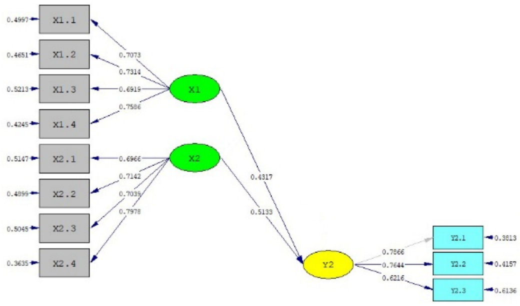


Fig 4: Path Coefficient of Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing on Customer Value

The calculation results obtained indicate that the Customer Value variable is influenced by both Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing, both partially and simultaneously. Based on the correlation values and path coefficients obtained from the Lisrel 8.80 calculation results, the magnitude of the direct and indirect effects of Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing on Customer Value can be determined as follows:

Table 11: The Direct and Indirect Effects of Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing Variables on Customer Value

| | **Path Coeff** | **Direct Effect** | **Influence Through** | | | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | ***Brand Equity*** | ***Relationship Marketing*** | **Total indirect** | |
| ***Brand Equity*** | 0,4317 | 18,64% | | 15,96% | 15,96% | **34,60%** |
| ***Relationship Marketing*** | 0,5133 | 26,35% | 15,96% | | 15,96% | **42,31%** |
| **Total** | | **44,98%** | **15,96%** | **15,96%** | **31,93%** | **76,91%** |

Based on the table above, Customer Value is influenced by both direct and indirect effects. The direct effect of the Brand Equity variable is 18.64%, while its indirect effect through Relationship Marketing is 15.96%. The direct effect of the Relationship Marketing variable on Customer Value is 26.35%, while its indirect effect through Brand Equity is 15.96%. According to the calculation results, the total partial influence is highest for the Relationship Marketing variable, with a total influence on Customer Value of 42.31%. Therefore, it can be concluded that to increase Customer Value, it should be supported by good Relationship Marketing. However, the influence of other variables that affect Customer Value, examined in this research, is also significant, namely, Brand Equity, with a total partial influence of 34.60%.

Table 12: Partial Test Results of Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing on Customer Value

| **structural** | **Path Coefficients** | **t-count** | **t-table** | **Result** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $\gamma_1$ | 0,4317 | 4,8312 | 1,9709 | Accepted |
| $\gamma 2$ | 0,5133 | 5,0536 | 1,9709 | Accepted |

For the path coefficient X2 to Y2 = 0.5133, the calculated t-value is 5.0536 by taking a significance level of α at 5%, then the t-table value or t0.05.221 = 1.9709, so because the calculated t-value = 5.0536 is greater than the t-table = 1.9709, then H0 is rejected or in other words Relationship Marketing influences Customer Value. Based on the equation above, it can be explained that the Customer Trust variable is positively influenced by Purchase Decisions with a path coefficient of 0.5138, and is positively influenced by Customer Value with a path coefficient of 0.4973. Based on the calculation, the obtained F-value is 363.0883, where the criteria for rejecting H0 are if the F-value is greater than the F-table or F0 > F-table, with degrees of freedom v1=2 and v2=221–3–1 and a confidence level of 95%. From the F-distribution table, the F-table value for F0.05,2,221 = 3.0372. Since 363.0883 is greater than 3.0372, H0 is rejected, meaning that it can be concluded that there is a linear relationship between Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing towards Customer Value, or it can be interpreted that there is a joint influence between Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing towards Customer Value.

Structural Model 3 depicts the relationship between Purchase Decisions and Customer Value toward Customer Trust, as formulated in the hypotheses: that Purchase Decisions and Customer Value have an impact on Customer Trust both partially and simultaneously. Based on the results of data processing using the Lisrel program for Structural Model 3, the obtained results are as follows:

$$Z = 0.5138*Y1 + 0.4973*Y2, \text{Errorvar.}= 0.1599, R2 = 0.8401$$

Based on the equation above, it can be explained that the variable Customer Trust is positively influenced by Purchase Decisions with a path coefficient of 0.5138, and is positively influenced by Customer Value with a path coefficient of 0.4973. Thus, the proposed conceptual hypotheses have been tested and accepted. The complete structural model for substructure 3 can be depicted as follows:

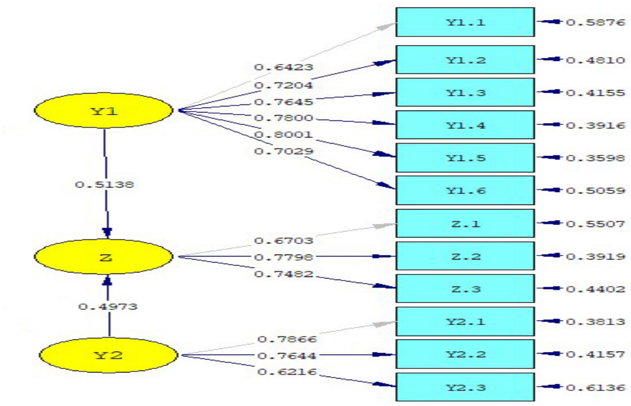


Fig 5: The path coefficient of Purchase Decision and Customer Value on Customer Trust

The calculation results show that the variable Customer Trust is influenced by Purchase Decisions and Customer Value both partially and simultaneously. Based on the correlation values and path coefficients obtained from the Lisrel 8.80 calculation results, the magnitude of the direct and indirect effects of Purchase Decisions and Customer Value on Customer Trust can be determined as follows:

Table 13: The Direct and Indirect Effects of Purchase Decisions and Customer Value Variables on Customer Trust

| | **Path Coeff** | **Direct Effect** | **Influence Through** | | | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Purchase Decision** | **Cust Value** | **Total indirect** | |
| **Purchase Decision** | 0,5138 | 26,40% | | 16,44% | 16,44% | **42,84%** |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Cust Value** | 0,4973 | 24,73% | 16,44% | [redacted] | 16,44% | **41,17%** |
| **Total** | | **51,13%** | **16,44%** | **16,44%** | **32,88%** | **84,01%** |

Based on the table above, Customer Trust is influenced by both direct and indirect effects. The direct influence of the Purchase Decision variable is 26.40%, while its indirect influence through Customer Value is 16.44%. The direct influence of the Customer Value variable on Customer Trust is 24.73%, with an indirect influence of 16.44% through Purchase Decisions. According to the calculation results, the total partial influence is greatest for the Purchase Decision variable, with a total influence on Customer Trust of 42.84%. Therefore, it can be concluded that improving Customer Trust must be supported by good Purchase Decisions. However, other variables studied in this research also have a significant impact on Customer Trust, notably Customer Value, with a total partial influence of 41.17%.

Table 14: Partial Test Results of Purchase Decision and Customer Value on Customer Trust

| structural | Path Coefficients | t-count | t-table | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $\beta_1$ | 0,5138 | 5,7289 | 1,9709 | Accepted |
| $\beta_2$ | 0,4973 | 4,8733 | 1,9709 | Accepted |

For the path coefficient Y1 to Z = 0.5138, the obtained t-value is 5.7289 by taking a significance level of α of 5%. The t-table value or t0.05.221 = 1.9709, so because t-value = 5.7289 is greater than t-table = 1.9709, then H0 is rejected or in other words, Purchase Decision affects Customer Trust. For the path coefficient Y2 to Z = 0.4973, the obtained t-value is 4.8733 by taking a significance level of α of 5%. The t-table value or t0.05.221 = 1.9709, so because t-value = 4.8733 is greater than t-table = 1.9709, then H0 is rejected or in other words, Customer Value affects Customer Trust.

This study underscores the substantial impact of Relationship Marketing and Brand Equity on shaping Purchase Decisions at PT. Gramedia Marketing Region CIAYUMAJAKUNING. The authors delve into the theoretical reasoning behind these relationships, emphasizing that beyond establishing customer relationships, the creation of personalized interactions, loyalty programs, and engaging experiences through Relationship Marketing contributes significantly (39.47%) to shaping trust and satisfaction, thereby influencing purchase decisions at PT. Gramedia. Simultaneously, the established brand equity, rooted in perceived quality and a positive image (33.11%), highlights the importance of strategies such as tailored communication, exclusive offers, and brand awareness campaigns in the CIAYUMAJAKUNING region to further incentivize purchases. The authors suggest that recognizing the potential influence of customer value is crucial and recommend exploring strategies to enhance repeat purchases and customer loyalty as a valuable next step in their theoretical framework. Consistent with theoretical reasoning, the study aligns with previous research (Fazri & Hasbi, 2018; Putri & Deniza, 2018; Tugiso et al., 2016), emphasizing the pivotal roles of customer relationships (Relationship Marketing) and brand image (Brand Equity) in influencing purchase decisions. The authors draw parallels with findings from (Yulianto et al., 2021), indicating that brand equity is perceived as a primary driving force influencing purchase decisions, particularly in the context of cosmetic consumers. This comparison across studies allows the authors to situate their results within existing theoretical frameworks, providing a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical reasoning behind the observed relationships.

Simultaneously, (Mitang et al., 2020) identify a positive and significant effect in their study. The comprehensive analysis conducted in our research reveals that both Relationship Marketing and Brand Equity make substantial contributions to customer value at PT. Gramedia, with a combined influence of 76.91%. This underscores the critical importance of fostering robust customer relationships through personalized recommendations, loyalty programs, and active engagement. Additionally, the reinforcement of Brand Equity, emphasizing perceived quality, positive image, and local relevance in the CIAYUMAJAKUNING region, is highlighted as a means to further enhance customer value.

Building on these insights, the study proposes actionable recommendations for PT. Gramedia, suggesting initiatives such as hosting interactive workshops and developing targeted ad campaigns tailored to resonate with local audiences. These strategies are identified as potential drivers to increase customer value, ultimately leading to improved repeat purchase rates, long-term customer loyalty, and sustained market success. Reiterating the consistency of our findings with previous research, specifically (Amoako et al., 2019), the study emphasizes the positive relationship between Brand Equity and customer value. The analysis further delves into the nuanced role of Relationship Marketing, asserting its crucial impact on customer value. In particular,

Relationship Marketing is identified as a key factor in fostering emotional connections with customers, resulting in increased satisfaction, loyalty, and a greater willingness to spend. The direct contributions of personalized recommendations, engaging customer service experiences, and loyalty programs to higher perceived value are highlighted. To maximize the impact of Relationship Marketing on customer value, the study recommends specific strategies for PT. Gramedia, including the hosting of interactive workshops and the development of tiered loyalty programs with exclusive benefits. The integration of these efforts, coupled with a steadfast focus on Brand Equity, is posited as a powerful approach to significantly enhance customer value and drive long-term success for PT. Gramedia in the CIAYUMAJAKUNING region. In this broader context, the improvement of Brand Equity and Relationship Marketing practices at PT. Gramedia Marketing Region CIAYUMAJAKUNING is positioned as a strategic imperative to elevate overall Customer Value.

The analysis conducted in this study unveils that both Purchase Decisions (42.84%) and Customer Value (33.11%) wield significant influence over Customer Trust at PT. Gramedia. Positive buying experiences, personalized recommendations, and transparent communication contribute to seamless Purchase Decisions, while Customer Value is driven by a sense of being valued through exclusive offers, customized resources, and fair treatment. In light of these insights, maximizing these indicators becomes crucial for PT. Gramedia, and practical measures are suggested, such as offering tiered loyalty programs with bonus points and providing access to educational webinars tailored to customer preferences. Despite existing research indicating a potentially weaker link between customer value and trust, PT. Gramedia's dedicated focus on personalized value creation and transparent communication in the CIAYUMAJAKUNING region is posited to potentially lead to an increase in customer trust. This strategic emphasis is anticipated to further solidify PT. Gramedia's market position. This finding aligns with empirical evidence from (Ekawati & Winarti, 2018; Wiwoho, 2018). (Maesarah & Madiawati, 2015; Rachbini et al., 2019; S. Ratnasari, 2015)which collectively highlight a relationship between customer value and customer trust.

To cultivate greater Customer Trust, the study emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the maximization of indicators for both Purchase Decisions and Customer Value. Concrete strategies, such as streamlining the checkout process, offering personalized recommendations, and providing outstanding customer support, are identified as effective measures to improve Purchase Decisions. Similarly, the implementation of tiered loyalty programs with exclusive discounts, offering personalized learning resources, and ensuring fair treatment is seen as instrumental in maximizing Customer Value. By strategically implementing these recommended strategies, PT. Gramedia stands to potentially achieve an increase in customer trust, thereby solidifying its position as a trusted provider in the CIAYUMAJAKUNING region. Although the study's findings differ from some existing research, the consistent focus on personalized value creation and transparent communication within this specific market context suggests a strong positive relationship between Customer Value and Customer Trust. The call for further research encourages a deeper exploration of this link, providing valuable insights for businesses operating in similar contexts and contributing to the evolving understanding of the dynamics between customer value and trust.

## 5. Conclusion

This research brings to light the profound impact of Relationship Marketing and Brand Equity on key facets of PT. Gramedia, specifically within the distinctive context of CIAYUMAJAKUNING. Relationship Marketing, characterized by personalized interactions and loyalty programs, emerges as the primary driver (39.47%) in shaping purchase decisions, fostering trust, and instilling value that encourages repeat business. Complementing this, a robust Brand Equity (33.11%), anchored in perceived quality, positive image, and local relevance, further solidifies customer confidence, providing additional impetus for purchases. However, the customer journey does not culminate with the purchase. Positive experiences during and after the purchase, facilitated by seamless transactions and post-purchase support, directly contribute to perceived Customer Value. This heightened satisfaction and loyalty, in turn, become instrumental in fostering Customer Trust, transforming satisfied customers into brand advocates who forge strong connections with PT. Gramedia. To leverage these insights, actionable recommendations are crucial. Hosting interactive workshops and developing tiered loyalty programs emerge as key strategies through which PT. Gramedia can maximize the impact of Relationship Marketing. Simultaneously, local engagement campaigns, emphasizing quality credentials, and offering personalized learning resources can significantly enhance Brand Equity, exerting a considerable influence on purchase decisions and value perception. Ultimately, the optimization of the purchase experience, achieved through streamlined processes, responsive support, and post-purchase rewards, coupled with a focus on maximizing Customer Value indicators, will propel greater Customer Trust. This, in turn, solidifies PT. Gramedia standing in the region. While acknowledging the presence of limitations that warrant further research, these findings offer a comprehensive roadmap for PT. Gramedia success and pave the way for continued exploration of these critical relationships within the evolving educational landscape.

## References

Aaker. (2018). *Manajemen ekuitas merek.*

Afzal, H., Khan, M. A., Rehman, K. ur, Ali, I., & Wajahat, S. (2010). Consumer's Trust in the Brand: Can it be built through Brand Reputation, Brand Competence and Brand Predictability. *International Business Research*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v3n1p43

Ali, B. J. (2021). Assessing ( The impact ) of advertisement on customer decision making : Evidence from an educational institution. *Algerian Scientific Journal Platform*, *01*, 425–439.

Alrubaiee, L., & Al-Nazer, N. (2010). Investigate the Impact of Relationship Marketing Orientation on Customer Loyalty: The Customer's Perspective. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, *2*(1), 155–174. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijms.v2n1p155

Álvarez, L. S., Casielles, R. V., & Martín, A. M. D. (2011). Analysis of the role of complaint management in the context of relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *27*(1–2), 143–164. https://doi.org/10.1080/02672571003719088

Amoako, G. K. (2019). Relationship Marketing, Orientation, Brand Equity and Firm Value: The Mediating Role of Customer Value—An Emerging Market Perspective. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, *18*(4), 280–308. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332667.2019.1639589

Amoako, G. K., Okpattah, B. K., & Arthur, E. (2019). The impact of social media marketing on brand equity - A perspective of the telecommunication industry in Ghana. *Journal of Business & Retail Management Research*, *13*(03), 113–122. https://doi.org/10.24052/jbrmr/v13is03/art-11

Anastasia, R., Ruruk, N., Jaya, A., Halik, J. B., & Londong, J. P. (2023). The Influence of Relationship Marketing and Customer Loyalty on Makassar Mixue Consumer Purchasing Decisions. *Journal of Entrepreneur Business and Management*, *1*(3), 29–44. https://doi.org/10.37531/jebm.v1i3.79

Barnes, J. G. (2003). *Secret of Customer Relationship Management (Rahasia Manajemen Hubungan Pelanggan)*.

Brodie, R. J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., & Hollebeek, L. (2013). Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, *66*(1), 105–114. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.07.029

Buttle, F. (2004). *Customer Relationship Management, Bayu media, Publishing*. Bayu Media Publishing.

Che, J. W. S., Cheung, C. M. K., & Thadani, D. R. (2017). Consumer purchase decision in instagram stores: The role of consumer trust. *Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, *2017-Janua*, 24–33. https://doi.org/10.24251/hicss.2017.004

Chinomona, R., Mahlangu, D., & Pooe, D. (2013). Brand service quality, satisfaction, trust and preference as predictors of consumer brand loyalty in the retailing industry. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, *4*(14), 181–190. https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2013.v4n14p181

D, D., Sinha, R., Wen, C. P., Kee, D. M. H., Ching, C. S., Er, L. K., Agarwal, S., Pandey, R., Putra, T. W., Sin, L. G., & Yan, Y. W. (2021). The Influence of Brand Equity on Consumer Purchase Decisions at Starbucks. *International Journal of Accounting & Finance in Asia Pasific*, *4*(1), 37–50. https://doi.org/10.32535/ijafap.v4i1.1031

Ekawati, R., & Winarti, W. (2018). Meningkatkan Loyalitas Pelanggan melalui Nilai Pelanggan dan Customer Relationship. *FRIMA Festifal Riset Ilmiah Manajemen & Akuntansi*, 515–523.

Fachmi, M., & Rahayu Tri Astuti, S. (2016). ANALISIS KEMENARIKAN DESAIN WEBSITE, REPUTASI VENDOR, DAN PERSEPSI KEMUDAHAN TRANSAKSI TERHADAP KEPUTUSAN PEMBELIAN BELANJA ONLINE DENGAN PERSEPSI NILAI PELANGGAN SEBAGAI VARIABEL INTERVENING. *Diponegoro Journal of Management*, *5*(3), 1–17. http://ejournal-s1.undip.ac.id/index.php/dbr

Fazri, A., & Hasbi, I. (2018). PENGARUH BRAND EQUITY TEH BOTOL SOSRO TERHADAP PROSES KEPUTUSAN PEMBELIAN DI KOTA BANDUNG. *E-Proceeding of Management*, *5*(1).

Gunawardane, N. R. (2015). Impact of Brand Equity towards Purchasing Desition: A Situation on Mobile Telecommunication Services of Sri Lanka. *Journal of Marketing Management (JMM)*, *3*(1), 100–117. https://doi.org/10.15640/jmm.v3n1a10

Hanaysha, J. R. (2018). An examination of the factors affecting consumer's purchase decision in the Malaysian retail market. *PSU Research Review*, *2*(1), 7–23. https://doi.org/10.1108/PRR-08-2017-0034

Hermuningsih, S., Rahmawati, A. D., & Mujino, M. (2018). Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Return Saham. *Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis*, *19*(3), 78. https://doi.org/10.30659/ekobis.19.3.78-89

Heru, D. A., Susilo, H., & Riyadi. (2015). PENGARUH KEMUDAHAN DAN KEPERCAYAAN MENGGUNAKAN E-COMMERCE TERHADAP KEPUTUSAN PEMBELIAN ONLINE (Survei Pada Konsumen www.petersaysdenim.com). *Jurnal Administrasi Bisnis (JAB)*, *22*(1). https://doi.org/10.1016/0043-1354(82)90189-0

Hollensen, S. (2015). *Marketing Management: A Relationship Approach*.

Jamal, A., & Sharifuddin, J. (2015). Perceived value and perceived usefulness of halal labeling: The role of religion and culture. *Journal of Business Research*, *68*(5), 933–941.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.09.020

Kaur, G., Sharma, R. D., & Mahajan, N. (2012). Exploring customer switching intentions through relationship marketing paradigm. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *30*(4), 280–302. https://doi.org/10.1108/02652321211236914

Koesworodjati, Y. (2017). Pengaruh Bauran Pemasan dan Nilai Pelanggan terhadap Kepuasan Pelanggan dan Implikasinya kepada Kepercayaan Wisatawan Nusantara pada Objek Wisata. *Kontigensi: Scientific Journal of ...*, *5*(1), 25–44. http://jurnal.dim-unpas.web.id/index.php/JIMK/article/view/37/66

Köhler, C. F., Rohm, A. J., de Ruyter, K., & Wetzels, M. (2011). Return on Interactivity: The Impact of Online Agents on Newcomer Adjustment. *Journal of Marketing*, *75*(2), 93–108. https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.75.2.93

Kotler, P., & Amstrong, G. (2014). *PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING (12th ed.)*.

Kotler dan Amstrong. (2012). *Marketing of Management, 14th Edition Pearson International Edition*.

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Principles Of Marketing* (15th ed.). Pearson Education,Inc.

Lamanuk, N. I. B., & Ferrinadewi, E. (2020). Pengaruh Bauran Pemasaran Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Serta Dampaknya Terhadap Kepuasan Konsumen Kampoeng Roti di Surabaya. *Seminar Nasional Ilmu Terapan (SNITER)*, *4*(1), 1–9. https://ojs.widyakartika.ac.id/index.php/sniter/article/view/198

Lin, L. Y., & Ching Yuh, C. Y. (2010). The influence of corporate image, relationship marketing, and trust on purchase intention: the moderating effects of word□of□mouth. *Tourism Review*, *65*(3), 16–34. https://doi.org/10.1108/16605371011083503

Lovelock, C., & Wirtz, J. (2011). *Service marketing: People, technology, strategy 7th edition.*

Lupiyoadi, R. (2013). *Service marketing management*.

Maesarah, S., & Madiawati, P. N. (2015). Pengaruh Orientasi Pasar Terhadap Nilai Pelanggan Serta Implikasinya Terhadap Kepercayaan Pelanggan (studi Pada Kereta Api Lodaya). *EProceedings ...*, *2*(3), 3961–3970. https://libraryeproceeding.telkomuniversity.ac.id/index.php/management/article/view/2204

McEvily, B., & Tortoriello, M. (2011). Measuring trust in organisational research: Review and recommendations. *Journal of Trust Research*, *1*(1), 23–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2011.552424

Mitang, B. B., Korbaffo, A., & Lay, D. (2020). Pengaruh Kualitas Informasi, Relationship Marketing Dan Ekuitas Merek Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Cream Fair Dan Lovely. *Inspirasi Ekonomi : Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen*, *2*(1), 34–40. https://doi.org/10.32938/jie.v2i1.548

Mowen, J. C., & Minor, M. (2012). *Perilaku Konsumen dialih bahasakan oleh Dwi Kartika Yahya*.

Narimawati, U. (2010). *Metodologi Penelitian : Dasar Penyusun Penelitian Ekonomi*.

Nigam, A., & Kaushik, R. (2011). Impact of Brand Equity on Customer Purchase Decisions: An Empirical Investigation with Special Reference to Hatchback Car Owners in Central Haryana. *IJCEM International Journal of Computational Engineering & Management*, *12*(April), 2230–7893. www.IJCEM.orgIJCEMwww.ijcem.org

Pappas, N. (2017). The complexity of purchasing intentions in peer-to-peer accommodation. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *29*(9), 2302–2321.

https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-08-2016-0429

Pradana, M., & Reventiary, A. (2016). ENGARUH ATRIBUT PRODUK TERHADAP KEPUTUSAN PEMBELIAN SEPATU MEREK CUSTOMADE (STUDI di MEREK DAGANG CUSTOMADE INDONESIA). *JURNAL MANAJEMEN*, *6*(01), 61–72. https://doi.org/10.24123/jbt.v2i01.1087

Prasad, S., Gupta, I. C., & Totala, N. K. (2017). Social media usage, electronic word of mouth and purchase-decision involvement. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, *9*(2), 134–145. https://doi.org/10.1108/APJBA-06-2016-0063

Priansa, D. J. (2016). Pengaruh e-wom dan persepsi nilai terhadap keputusan konsumen untuk berbelanja online di Lazada. *Ecodemica*, *IV (1)*(2355–0295), 117–124.

Putri, & Deniza. (2018). Pengaruh Brand Awareness Dan Brand Loyalty Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Produk Chicken Nugget Fiesta Di Kota Padang. *Jurnal Agrica*, *11*(2), 70–78. http://ojs.uma.ac.id/index.php/agrica

Rachbini, W., Salim, F., Haque, M. G., & Rahmawati, E. (2019). Analisis Niat Pembelian Ulang E-Comerce Mobile dengan Pendekatan Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). *Jurnal Aplikasi Bisnis Dan Manajemen*, *5*(3), 530–540. https://doi.org/10.17358/jabm.5.3.530

Ratnasari, P. S. P., & Purnawati, N. K. (2019). Pengaruh Profitabilitas, Likuiditas, Tingkat Pertumbuhan Perusahaan Dan Leverage Terhadap Kebijakan Dividen. *E-Jurnal Manajemen Universitas Udayana*, *8*(10), 6179. https://doi.org/10.24843/ejmunud.2019.v08.i10.p16

Ratnasari, S. (2015). Pengaruh Kualitas Layanan Dan Nilai Pelanggan Terhadap Kepuasan Serta Dampaknya Pada Kepercayaan Pelanggan Pt. Mitra Intertrans Forwarding Cabang Palu. *Katalogis*, *3*(1), 116–120.

Sashi, C. M. (2012). Customer engagement, buyer-seller relationships, and social media. *Management Decision*, *50*(2), 253–272. https://doi.org/10.1108/00251741211203551

Sasmita, J., & Mohd Suki, N. (2015). Young consumers' insights on brand equity: Effects of brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand image. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, *43*(3), 276–292. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-02-2014-0024

Satvati, S. R., Rabiei, M., & Rasouli, K. (2016). Studying the relationship between brand equity and consumer behavior. *International Business Management*, *10*(15), 3238–3243. https://doi.org/10.5937/intrev1602153s

Simamora, S., Silalahi, M., Nainggolan, N. T., & Candra, V. (2019). Pengaruh Harga Dan Customer Relationship Marketing Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Konsumen Pada Ud Sentral Jaya Pematangsiantar. *SULTANIST: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Keuangan*, *7*(2), 62–72. https://doi.org/10.37403/sultanist.v7i2.154

Simbolon, F. P. (2016). The Impact of Relationship Marketing Strategy in Indonesia Retail Industries. *Binus Business Review*, *7*(2), 143. https://doi.org/10.21512/bbr.v7i2.1590

Siswanto, A., Haryono, A. T., & Fathoni, A. (2018). … Inovasi Dan Nilai Pelanggan Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Mobil Daihatsu Sigra Di Semarang Dengan Kepuasan Pelanggan Sebagai …. *Journal of Management*. http://jurnal.unpand.ac.id/index.php/MS/article/view/998

Sivesan, S., & Achchuthan, S. (2013). Customer Perception towards Relationship Marketing and Personal Demographic Variables: A study of Jaffna District, Srilanka. *Management and Administrative Sciences Review*, *2*(1), 67–78. http://www.academia.edu/download/31407054/Achchuthan__S.pdf

Staudt, S., Shao, C. Y., Dubinsky, A. J., & Wilson, P. H. (2014). Corporate Social Responsibility , Perceived Customer Value , and Customer- Based Brand Equity : A Cross-National Comparison.

*Journal of Strategic Innovation and Sustainability*, *10*(1), 65–87.

Suhaily, L., & Darmoyo, S. (2017). Effect of product quality, perceived price and brand image on purchase decision mediated by customer trust (study on japanese brand electronic product). *Jurnal Manajemen*, *21*(2), 179–194. https://doi.org/10.24912/jm.v21i2.230

Thaichon, P., & Quach, T. N. (2015). The relationship between service quality, satisfaction, trust, value, commitment and loyalty of Internet service providers' customers. *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*, *25*(4), 295–313. https://doi.org/10.1080/21639159.2015.1073419

Tjiptono, F. (2006). *Pemasaran Jasa*.

Tugiso, I., Haryono, A. T., & Minarsih, M. M. (2016). Pengaruh relationship marketing, Keamanan, kepercayaan dan kualitas pelayanan terhadap keputusan pembelian online shop dan loyalitas konsumen sebagai variabel intervening studi kasus pada onlineshop "Numira" Semarang. *Journal of Management*, *2*(2), 1–18. https://jurnal.unpand.ac.id/index.php/MS/article/view/558/543

Van Thuy, N., Anh, N. T. N., & Binh, N. T. X. (2022). Impact of Brand Equity on Consumer Purchase Decision: a Case Study of Mobile Retailer in Hochiminh City, Vietnam. *Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research*, *9*(2), 229–239. https://doi.org/10.15549/jeecar.9i2.762

Vincent Sjaklif, Hendra, B. P. (2020). The influence of brand equity on consumer purchase decisions (study case on tokopedia e-commerce). *International Journal of Economic and Business Applied*, *1*(2), 231–243.

Wang, D. H. M., Chen, P. H., Yu, T. H. K., & Hsiao, C. Y. (2015). The effects of corporate social responsibility on brand equity and firm performance. *Journal of Business Research*, *68*(11), 2232–2236. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.06.003

Wiwoho, A. S. (2018). PENGARUH RELATIONSHIP MARKETING, CUSTOMER VALUE, DAN TRUST TERHADAP LOYALITAS PELANGGAN PADA PT. ASURANSI JIWASRAYA CABANG KOTA MALANG. *JURNAL MANAJEMEN BISNIS*, 115–123.

Yee, C. J., & San, N. C. (2011). Consumers ' Perceived Quality , Perceived Value and Perceived Risk Towards Purchase Decision on Automobile. *American Journal of Economics and Business Administration*, *3*(1), 47–57.

Yuliana, Y., & Putra, M. G. (2018). PENGARUH PERCEIVED QUALITY DAN BRAND LOYALTY TERHADAP KEPUTUSAN PEMBELIAN PADA KONSUMEN SIM CARD. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Hasil Penelitian 2018*, 306–312.

Yulianto, H., Sutomo, Y., Palupiningtyas, D., & Nugraheni, K. S. (2021). Investigating the role of interactive social media and halal brand equity on purchase decision-making: direct and indirect effects. *Measuring Business Excellence*, *February*. https://doi.org/10.1108/MBE-02-2021-0025

Zulkifli. (2012). Relationship Marketing Terhadap Customer Retention dan Customer Loyalty pada Nasabah Bank Mega, Tbk. Malang. *Jurnal Manajemen Dan Akuntansi*, *1*(April), 1–12.